

## **The Quarry Project**

By

Andrew Vellenga

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The Quarry Project, a conference on Masonic research and preservation, is the result of collaboration of the Masonic Society and the Masonic Library and Museum Association. The intent of the conference was to provide resources, information, and contacts to those interested in Masonic research and artifact preservation. The conference was held on the weekend of September 26 through 29 at the George Washington Masonic Memorial in Alexandria, Virginia.

According to the Quarry Project website [[www.thequarryproject.com](http://www.thequarryproject.com)], the popularity of Freemasonry in recent popular media has raised a great deal of interest in the fraternity and has generated scholarship about Freemasonry from both Masons and non-Masons alike. The intent of the conference is to support the quality of Masonic research and publications as well as provide instruction and advice on maintaining Masonic historical literature and artifacts. From the Quarry Projects webpage:

The story of Freemasonry is a fascinating one that deserves to be honestly communicated on the world stage in a clear, concise, and consistent manner. It is up to those that tell the story to maintain the highest possible standards so that, as we are taught, “the honor, glory, and reputation of the institution might be firmly established and the world at large convinced of its good effects.” The Quarry Project aspires to assist in the establishing and maintaining those standards [[www.thequarryproject.com](http://www.thequarryproject.com), accessed Nov. 12, 2013].

The conference specifically targeted two main groups of Masonic historians. The first group consisted of Masonic authors, writers, and researchers and the second group focused on Masonic librarians and museum curators. The two categories of presentations ran simultaneously throughout the conference with one set focused on research and writing and the other on cataloguing and preservation. Topics covered in the cataloguing and preservation classes were presentations on collection policies, inventory, cataloguing, and preservation. Topics addressed in the research and writing presentations dealt primarily with effective writing, research techniques, and strategies for getting published. The presentations for both groups were extremely informative and practical. The presenters were knowledgeable, approachable, and communicated the information effectively.

Prior to dividing into the two main subject matter concentrations, the conference began each day with a keynote speaker. Topics included historical techniques, artifact analysis, and Masonic exhibits. The end of each day concluded with expert panel discussions providing advice and best practices on Masonic publishing and museums. The conference concluded on Sunday with a very interesting capstone presentation by S. Brent Morris, Ph. D titled, “Masonic Meta-analysis vs. Original Masonic Research” where he illustrated methods of historical analysis through examples of how Freemasons dealt with information leaks in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as well as interactions between Prince Hall and Boston newspaper editors in the 1780s. Links to Dr. Morris’s presentation as well as the majority of the presentations given at the conference are

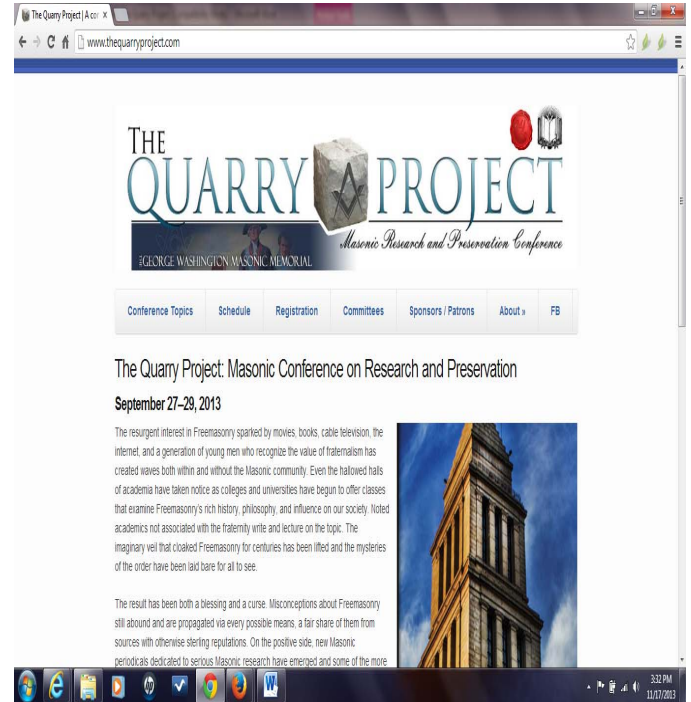
currently available on the Quarry Project's schedule page

([www.thequarryproject.com/schedule/](http://www.thequarryproject.com/schedule/)).

This was the first year for the Quarry Project and there were a few administrative and logistical issues that caught the organizers by surprise. These issues were minor and did not impact the quality of the presentations, speakers, or the overall value of the conference and the event was well worth the \$250 conference fee.

Beyond the quality of the information presented was the extraordinary access to many of the most accomplished Masonic historians, researchers, and curators in the country. Editors of many of the major Masonic journals were also present and allowed for many valuable networking opportunities. The organizers are still debating whether to make the Quarry Project an annual or biennial event. Regardless, this year's positive feedback from the attendees will ensure that future conferences will be in high demand. The Quarry Project provided aspiring Masonic researchers and historians the practical resources necessary to improve their skills and effectively present and preserve the history and traditions of Freemasonry.

<http://www.thequarryproject.com/>



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